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THE HON. SRI R. SHANMUGA RAJESWARA SETHUPATHI : I have no information on the point that the ayacutdars are willing to contribute on a 50–50 basis. If we construct a dam at a cost of Rs. 73,000, the interest on capital outlay would come to about Rs. 3,000 annually. The Collector has suggested the putting up of a mud dam at a cost not exceeding a thousand rupees, provided the ayacutdars are willing to contribute a portion of the cost. For that there was no response. If the suggestion of the Collector is agreed to, the Government can spend up to a thousand rupees. The construction of a permanent masonry structure will involve disproportionately huge cost.

SRI V. BALAKRISHNAN : Is the Hon. Minister aware that this temporary construction is not of such a type as to give a permanent storage and is he also aware of the fact that this temporary construction is liable to break at every flood defeating the purpose of the dam and preventing the required storage?

THE HON. SRI R. SHANMUGA RAJESWARA SETHUPATHI : Spending every year one thousand rupees is cheaper than spending a huge amount on a permanent structure involving an amount of interest of Rs. 3,000 on the capital outlay annually. The cost of construction of a permanent structure is not commensurate with the results obtained.

Milo meters in auto rickshaws

* 366 *Q.*—SRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM (on behalf of Sri N. K. Palanisamy) : Will the Hon. the Minister for Religious Endowments and Transport be pleased to state the steps taken by the Government to rectify the defects in the meters installed in auto-rickshaws in the City of Madras?

THE HON. SRI B. PARAMESWARAN : Taxi meters are not fitted to auto-rickshaws, since such meters small enough to be fitted to them are not at present available in the market. Only milo meters are fitted to auto-rickshaws. Local firms have been requested to devise a suitable meter for auto-rickshaws but so far they have not been able to do so.

SRI K. VINAYAKAM : At the present moment, the milo meters fixed to the auto-rickshaws are very small and more often they are covered with so much dust that the passengers travelling in the auto-rickshaws are not able to note down the meter readings. They have to depend on what the drivers of the auto-rickshaws say. Will the Government, therefore, instruct the firms to construct at least bigger meters and also instruct the Police officials to have them fixed near the seat of the passenger?

THE HON. SRI B. PARAMESWARAN : The Government have requested certain local firms to devise meters which could be fitted to the auto-rickshaws. We cannot fit big taxi-meters to auto-rickshaws. The Associated Traders, Madras, have addressed

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foreign firms in regard to this matter. I hope, Sir, shortly they will be able to secure meters which will possibly be fitted to auto-rickshaws. The Police have been prosecuting drivers who have not fixed milo meters to their auto-rickshaws and also such of those drivers as have not been keeping the meters quite clean. Further instructions will also be issued in this connexion.

Sri A. M. Rathnaswamy : There is a feeling of suspicion in the minds of persons travelling in auto-rickshaws that some kind of tampering with the meters is carried on by auto-rickshaw drivers and that this has become a regular nuisance in the City. Often, persons travelling in auto-rickshaws have to pick up quarrels with the drivers on account of that. Instead of the vehicle being a source of convenient conveyance it has become a regular nuisance. I want to know from the Hon. Minister as to whether he would find time to travel in an auto-rickshaw and to find out whether any such tampering is being practised by auto-rickshaw drivers and whether the drivers are rendering a correct account of the milage covered by their vehicles to the passengers?

The Hon. Sri B. Parameswaran : I have told the House on several occasions that there is no possibility of tampering with meters fitted to auto-rickshaws. No such cases have been brought to the notice of the Government. If travelling in auto-rickshaws is considered a nuisance it is because sometimes drivers demand more than the scheduled rates. But it all depends upon the persons travelling in them. If a person travelling in the auto-rickshaw wants to be magnanimous he can pay the sum demanded by the driver; but if he wants to stick to the reading in the meter he can do so and pay according to the meter reading. There is no question of nuisance arising. As matters stand, auto-rickshaws happen to be a cheap form of conveyance.

Sri K. R. Viswanathan : May I know whether it has been brought to the notice of the Government that auto-rickshaw drivers and also taxi drivers demand lump sum hire sometimes instead of the charges to which they are eligible according to meter readings?

The Hon. Sri B. Parameswaran : Several cases have been brought to the notice of the Government. The Police have prosecuted a lot of such cases. Such of those drivers as demand more than the scheduled rates are being prosecuted. The figures of prosecution of such cases are going up.

Sri V. Balakrishnan : இந்த ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாக்காரர்களின் தொல்லையானது வெளியூரிலிருந்து வருகிறவர்கள் எக்மோர் ஸ்டேஷனிலிருந்து இறங்கிய உடன் மாம்பலத்திற்கு விடமுடியும், சைதாப்பேட்டைக்கு விடமுடியும், மௌண்ட் ரோட்டுக்கு விடமுடியாது என்றெல்லாம் சொல்லுவதாக புகார் இருந்துகொண்டிருக்கிறதனால் ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாவிலுள்ள மீட்டர்களின் மத்தியிலுள்ள இலக்கம் சரியாக தெரிந்துகொள்ளமுடியாது என்பது மந்திரி அவர்களுக்கு தெரியுமா என்று கேட்கிறேன்.

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The Hon. Sri B. PARAMESWARAN : இருக்கிற ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாக்கள் கொஞ்சம் எண்ணிக்கை. அதிகமாக ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாக்கள் வேண்டுமென்று மக்கள் வேண்டுகின்றனர். இருந்தபோதிலும் அப்படி ஏதாவது புகார் வந்தால் அதை தடுக்க அரசாங்கம் வேண்டிய நடவடிக்கை எடுக்கும். போலீசாருக்குத் தெரிவித்தாலும் வேண்டிய நடவடிக்கை எடுக்கப்படும். போலீஸ் அதிகாரிகளும் இதற்கு வேண்டிய நடவடிக்கையை எடுப்பார்கள் என்று தெரிவித்துக்கொள்கிறேன்.

Sri S. C. C. ANTHONY PILLAI : Will the Government take steps to see that the existing milo meters are transferred to the back so that the passengers can read the meter readings easily? Will the Government also take steps to see that a light is fixed inside or over the milo meter so that the meter readings can be easily read?

The Hon. Sri B. PARAMESWARAN : It may be possible to attach a light quite adjacent to the meter. But I do not know whether the meter as such can be fixed at the back of the auto-rickshaw.

9-50 a.m. **Sri A. RATNAM :** சென்னையில் எத்தனை ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாக்கள் இருக்கின்றன. அதில் எத்தனை டிரைவர்கள் ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாவின் சொந்தக்காரர்களாக இருக்கிறார்கள் என்ற தகவல் கனம் மந்திரி அவர்களால் கொடுக்க முடியுமா ?

The Hon. Sri B. PARAMESWARAN : அதைவிட இதில் ஹரிஜன டிரைவர்கள் எத்தனை பேர்கள் என்று கேட்டு இருந்தால் நன்றாக இருந்திருக்கும். ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷா டிரைவர்களாக இருக்கும் அதிகம் பேரும் ஹரிஜன வகுப்பை சேர்ந்தவர்களும், பிற்பட்ட வகுப்பைச் சேர்ந்தவர்களுமாக இருக்கிறார்கள். டிரைவர்கள் நூற்றில் 75 பேர்கள் ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷா சொந்தக்காரர்களாக இருக்கிறார்கள்.

Sri K. VINAYAKAM : Sir, more often it happens that if the auto-rickshaw driver learns that it is meant for a short drive and not for a long drive, instead of refusing straightway, he deceives the hirer by saying that it is under hire or has been engaged and there is no device for the hirer to know whether it is actually under hire or not. Will the Government, therefore, think of putting up a device by which the meter could indicate to the hirer whether it has been engaged or not?

The Hon. Sri B. PARAMESWARAN : Sir, as I have already said, the Police authorities have requested certain firms to devise a meter which will be easily visible to the human eye and which can also be easily fitted on to the auto-rickshaws. But, in the absence of such a meter, I do not think the Government can do anything. However, the Police authorities have been instructed to receive such complaints and take immediate and drastic action whenever such complaints are received.

Sri R. A. NATARAJA MUDALIAR : டாக்ஸிகளுக்கு பிளாக் **(flag)** சிஸ்டம் இருப்பதுபோல் ஆட்டோ ரிக்ஷாக்களுக்கும் அந்த சிஸ்டம் வைக்கப்படுமா என்பதை அறிய விரும்புகிறேன்.

The Hon. Sri B. PARAMESWARAN : இல்லை என்று சொல்லி இருக்கிறார்கள்.

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SRI S. DAIVASIGAMONEY : Sir, is the Hon. Minister aware that the real trouble with these auto-rickshaw meters is that they are not able to show the number of furlongs travelled? Usually, the auto-rickshaw driver charges four annas immediately when we get into the rickshaw, even though we travel only about 10 yards and again he charges another four annas if we travel a little distance of another 10 yards. Thus he stands to gain almost 8 annas over and above the rates to which he is legally entitled.

THE HON. SRI B. PARAMESWARAN : I agree, Sir, but the defect cannot be rectified except by means of attaching a special device for this purpose and I am quite sure that within the course of three or four months, the firms here will be able to import through foreign firms suitable meters for being attached to the auto-rickshaws.

SRI M. R. RAMACHANDRAN : Sir, in view of the difficulties explained, will the Government increase the number of baby taxis and stop the plying of auto-rickshaws till a proper meter system is devised?

THE HON. SRI B. PARAMESWARAN : Sir, this question relates to auto-rickshaws. However, I may tell the hon. Member that we have granted licences for the plying of more than 310 baby taxis, but only about 110 baby taxis have been put on the roads. The Government are not stingy with regard to this matter, but it is the operators who are not willing to put more baby taxis on the roads.

SRI A. M. RATHNASWAMY : Sir, I do not know how many would be prepared to accept the statement of the Hon. the Minister that going in an auto-rickshaw is much cheaper than going in a baby taxi. I feel that the opposite is the correct, and that is the considered opinion of not only the Members of this House but also those who are outside this House. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether steps would be taken to check these meters at least once a month, because there is considerable suspicion in the minds of the travelling public that the meters do not show the correct milage.

THE HON. SRI B. PARAMESWARAN : Sir, I have given such an elaborate answer that I do not think there is any need for my further elaborating the point. I said that comparatively speaking, the charges we have to pay for an auto-rickshaw are cheaper than those we have to pay for baby taxis and in order to see that more facilities are available to the travelling public, we have granted licences to more baby taxi applicants. In spite of our granting the licences, those applicants, who wanted the licences, have not put then taxis on the roads. The checking of the meters is being done periodically and I can only say that more vigilant steps cannot be taken by the Government.